

RUTLAND HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Quarterly

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A 20th Century Partnership: Rutland and Its Chamber of Commerce



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A photo taken in the 1950's illustrates the transition of Rutland from a railroad center to a more auto oriented business center. This was the heart of Rutland commercial interests and the home of the Chamber of Commerce.

Introduction

In compiling a history of the Rutland Chamber of Commerce and its predecessors, the Quarterly editors were faced with the daunting task of sorting through multiple pages of hand-written notes, yellowed news clippings and well-worn pamphlets. However, the material, which is in the care of Special Collections at the Bailey-Howe Library of the University of Vermont, had been meticulously arranged and filed by library staff members. Jeffrey Marshall, archivist and curator, generously allowed the Rutland Historical Society to borrow and copy the material which permitted more thorough research and a lot less travel. The society is most appreciative for this assistance received from the university. It will now be possible to make these records more easily available locally.

It comes as no surprise that the story of the development of the chamber closely paralleled the 20th Century history of the city.

No attempt has been made to record all the precise dates. Emphasis has instead been placed on the early business organizations and the progression of the chamber by decades. It is unfortunate that space did not permit mention of the many people who contributed so much to the betterment of the city through their involvement with the chamber. Almost every local business or professional person in Rutland during the past hundred years at some time supported civic betterment.

The records of the Rutland Chamber of Commerce include the records of the Merchants' Association which was formed in 1898.

In Tribute



RUTLAND HERALD

LULA M. TYE

Miss Lula M. Tye became financial secretary of the Rutland Businessmen's Association on 14 March, 1912. In January 1930 she was named manager of the Chamber of Commerce. On 1 February 1951 she retired from the chamber after 39 years of service. She truly provided a thread that bound Rutland's business community together for nearly a half century.

A 20th Century Partnership: Rutland and Its Chamber of Commerce

As early as the 1880's a Rutland Business Men's Association existed. By 1889 this organization appears to have become the Rutland Board of Trade which existed until the end of the 19th Century.¹

On 30 March 1898 a preliminary meeting to form the Merchant's Association of Rutland, Vermont, was called to order by Mr. T.F. Donahue at the Rochester Clothing Store. Mr. E.C. Tuttle was elected to preside at this meeting which seemed to be primarily driven by local merchant concerns with various trading stamp plans. A committee was elected to come up with a scheme to compete with the trading stamps. This same committee was also to be the committee on permanent organization.²

After a 1 April 1898 meeting in the carpet room of Mayor L.G. Kingsley's store in which Glens Falls merchants shared their experiences with trading stamp schemes, the committee advised that Rutland merchants drop consideration of any effort to compete with the stamps. The committee then moved to form a permanent organization to be known as the Merchants' Association of the City of Rutland. The committee also moved to prevent the deliberations of the association from being published in any newspaper.³

At a meeting on 8 April 1898 the report of the by-laws committee was accepted. Membership was limited to any merchant doing business in the City of Rutland, Center Rutland and West Rutland. At a meeting on 12 April 1898 an amendment was passed which allowed associate members from any town or city outside of Rutland to be admitted if they were engaged in trade. A \$2.00 membership fee gave them all membership benefits except a vote. Mr. E.C. Tuttle was elected the first president of the Merchants' Association.⁴

The association resolved that "when it shall come to the knowledge of any member of this association that any scheme, gift enterprise or other form of advertising which calls for giving of stamps, periodicals, or the like, is being used or about to be used, it shall be his duty to report such to the Advertising Committee at once. And that this Association condemns the use of any such form of advertising among its members."⁵

On 25 April 1898 the association sponsored a special meeting at the Elks Hall in Rutland for a presentation on the credit system by Mr. C.H. Bagley, secretary of the St. Johnsbury Merchants' Association. Mr. Bagley pointed out that the St. Johnsbury association had been organized in 1890 to correct abuses in the credit system. He noted that when an association takes in members from the surrounding towns, the floating deadbeats are prevented from imposing on people in business and are made cash only customers at their place of residence.⁶

Monthly meetings were regularly held in the Odd Fellows rooms starting in May 1898. Among issues discussed at the monthly meetings were efforts to increase membership which would include ladies who were in business. Letters were sent to debtors offering them an opportunity to make arrangements to pay

their debts. Failure to heed this letter would result in a circular letter to all merchants recommending the denial of credit. A New York ticket scheme drew the scorn of the association as it voted to defer action on it for "at least 100 years." Store hours became an issue when 57 clerks sought early closing hours during July and August and during January, February and March. Their request was denied. By resolution the association sought to have the Vermont Legislature enact legislation to abolish trading stamp schemes.⁷

At the regularly monthly meeting in October 1898 it was voted that at the next meeting at least three quarters of an hour be devoted to the discussion of questions of public interest, especially the city hall, public urinals and city parks. Suffice it to say that at the November 1898 monthly meeting only seven members arrived and, lacking a quorum, the group adjourned.⁸

The first annual meeting was held 11 January 1899. At this time the monthly meeting days were changed to the third Monday of the month. W.C. Smith was elected president for 1899.⁹

In February the association sought a manufacturer to occupy the property of the Vermont School Seat Company. A number of non-association members were invited and attended this special meeting.¹⁰

At the March 1899 meeting a discussion of store closing hours brought out a great spectrum of opinions. Mr. Ryan suggested that the customers be surveyed. A notice of the Gardner, Massachusetts, businessmen's united movement to reject all advertising in any form was read. They would not give money or merchandise, nor purchase tickets to fairs or entertainments gotten up by lodges, societies or churches. As far as advertising, most of these solicitations were worthless to the merchant.¹¹

Discussions and efforts of the association ranged from seeking new industries for Rutland to concerns about the quality of street care.

In July there was no quorum and in September only the president and secretary showed up. In December only the secretary showed up. The January 1900 annual meeting was attended by nine people. Apparently there were no meetings in February, May, June, August and November. By the annual meeting in January 1901 the inactivity and thin membership appear to have generated a decision that the annual dues for 1901 would be \$2.00 but those members who paid \$2.00 in 1900 would be credited \$1.00 on the 1901 dues. At the March 1901 meeting the by-laws were amended to allow not only merchants but any businessman to join the association.¹²

But attempts to resuscitate the association seemed doomed. May, June and July meetings failed to achieve a quorum. No meeting was called in August. The September meeting drew 11 members when the association resolved that the Mayor be requested to ask for the resignation of three aldermen as their absence from the City was evidence of their inability to fulfill the duties of the office. In October there was a lack of quorum. There were seven members at the November 1901 meeting. Failure to get a quorum in December 1901 and January 1902 led to no call for a February meeting. March and April meetings were held but there are no records of any other meetings in 1902. There is a final fragmentary record of an 11 March 1903 meeting and an incomplete membership list for the year 1904.¹³

In 1909 there is some scattered evidence of the existence of a Rutland Improvement League which sometime between 1910 and 1911 produced a book-

let entitled *Industrial Rutland*. From 1909 to 1911 the Improvement League maintained an entry in the Rutland City Directory.

On 14 February 1912 about 60 Rutland businessmen met to organize the Rutland Merchants Protective Association. G.E. Chalmers was appointed temporary clerk. The *Rutland Herald* of 15 February 1912 succinctly summarized the rationale for this organization. First, was the proposition of cooperation among retail merchants for the black listing of "dead beats." Secondly, was the proposition of eliminating all but legitimate advertising. Merchants now were at the mercy of the everlasting canvasser. The present method thus became little else than a refined hold-up.¹⁴

On 29 February about 80 people attended the meeting and there were over 100 who had signed the agreement to be members. E.C. Tuttle, who had led the 1898 organization of businessmen was in favor of joining the association but wished to have the by-laws read before he came to any decision. George E. Chalmers was elected President.¹⁵

Between 29 February 1912 and 25 March 1912 a number of executive meetings were held for which the minutes were lost. At this time it was decided to hire Miss Lula M. Tye as financial secretary on 14 March 1912. She opened the first office of the organization in the store of D.E. Martin. About 26 March the office was removed to Rooms 35-36 of the Mead Building.¹⁶

One of the first projects of the association was to sponsor a Carnival to be held during Fair Week which the association would organize and operate. Barkens Fire Diving Act was reserved for the 1912 carnival. The association also organized an information bureau for Carnival Week and a general city cleanup week prior to the Carnival. The committee on "Merchants Floats" had a promise of 20. Sixteen autos were promised to be present on Thursday evening.¹⁷

During the remainder of 1912 the association considered joining the Chamber of Commerce of the United States but left the issue with the executive committee. A number of items regarding industries seeking sites in Rutland or sites in Rutland seeking industries were scattered throughout the association's meetings.¹⁸

In 1913 the Rutland Businessmen's Association planned a carnival to outdo previous ones. Over 7500 light globes were to be used in the night decorations. This was more elaborate than anything ever before attempted in Rutland. A fireworks display this year was to be downtown and not in the Baxter lot. Dancers, singers, balancing acts and more filled the list of attractions.¹⁹

Other issues of 1913 were: the possibility of an armory for Rutland, the possible change of West Street Cemetery into a park or playground and the organization of a "Commission Form of Government for Rutland" Club.²⁰

The association voted to erect a Christmas tree in Depot Park. But not all was peaceful. Association Secretary Mason was directed to write to members who were giving trading stamps to remind them that this was a violation of the membership agreement.²¹

In 1914 the association contributed \$25.00 to the Rutland Women's club to assist in their night school which was in session. At the April 1914 meeting it was moved and approved that clergymen of Rutland be invited to become active members of the association. At the May 1914 meeting the association decided to turn over the management of the 1914 Carnival to the Rutland Fair Association as they could manage both events more advantageously.²²



The Mead Building, with its carnival decorations, prominently advertised the five days of the 1913 Rutland Carnival, which provided an evening program at the Berwick and Bardwell corners, the depot green and the Depot Park. Fireworks and a parade opened the festivities. Dr. John A. Mead, owner of the Mead Building, posed in front with two Rutland police officers.

The annual meeting of the association in March 1915 did not have a quorum but at the adjourned annual meeting members approved a contract with Mr. Brehmer to produce a booklet boosting Rutland.²³

However, there were signs that times were changing. In June 1915 the association offered support to a proposal for an auto bus to go over the mountain. At the 1916 annual meeting in February George Chalmers announced that he was retiring as first president of the association after four years. In spite of this announcement the membership again elected him but he declined to serve. Isaac Miller was then elected president.²⁴



Chas. Sterns and Co. on Merchants Row was Rutland's premier department store. Proprietor Isaac Miller (fourth from r.) was president of the Rutland Businessmen's Association and served the chamber for many years.

With war on the horizon the association sponsored a "Preparedness Parade" on 4 July 1916. It also donated \$10.00 to Mrs. Chaffee for pajamas for the Company A boys who had been sent to the Mexican border in the summer of 1916.²⁵

On 31 January 1917 the association voted to join the Chamber of Commerce of the United States of America.²⁶

With the entry of the US into World War I in April 1917, the association's attention focused on the homefront needs of the war effort. Dr. Hamilton explained that the First Vermont Regiment of the National Guard and the Rutland Company A, in particular, had a need for additional men to bring the units to full strength. The association voted to pay for a telephone for the Navy recruiting office in Rutland. An auto trip to Camp Devens in Ayer, Massachusetts, was made available for members of families of the soldiers from this district.²⁷

The association agreed to assist in the food conservation program and when Fuel Administrator Garfield ordered that all stores be closed all day on Mondays, they voted that they would abide by "any and all future orders issued by our gov-

ernment." The Committee of the War Camp Community Recreation Fund raised \$1551.64 which was \$51.64 over their quota.²⁸

At the January 1918 meeting it was decided to omit this year's annual banquet due to war conditions. It was also decided that the dues of any member in war service would be remitted until after the war.²⁹

In May 1918 the association donated \$25.00 toward the Red Cross Fund. By October 1918 the great influenza epidemic had hit a peak of 710 cases and 45 deaths in Rutland. Accordingly "the regular meeting of the Rutland Businessmen's Association ...was cancelled, it being considered contrary to the Health Board ruling".³⁰

With the end of World War I in November 1918, the association's considerations returned to some more routine items such as the vote to have the Christmas public rest room be left with the Entertainment Committee to look after. President Badlam was to see about extra seats in the depot during holidays and that the street light globes were cleaned.³¹

In January 1919 the association sent a telegram requesting the return of the telegraph and telephone lines to the companies at once. Service under the government's management was deemed to have been less than satisfactory. In Rutland the association requested that the City consider support of the night school.³²

At the March 1919 meeting, Monday evening closing throughout the year was finally approved.³³

At a special meeting in May 1919, it was decided to close stores in the afternoon on Monday, May 5th during the Victory Loan "Flying Circus". The fire whistle would blow one long blast to signal the closing. Stores would reopen after the exhibition.³⁴

Plans to offer an entertainment for the returned soldiers concluded in a general consensus that a clam bake one day at the Fair would be appropriate. A request to the City Board of Aldermen failed as the aldermen felt they did not have the power to appropriate money for the clambake. It was then decided to authorize the Military Committee to organize the celebration and raise the funds in any way they thought best from public subscription.³⁵

Dr. Hamilton reported on the estimated figures to build an armory in Rutland:

\$15,000-site to be provided by the city.

\$35,000-for building by the state

\$40,000-cost of an armory at the present time.

The association unanimously agreed to see that the necessary \$3,000 to \$5,000 needed in addition to the state appropriation would be provided for building the next state armory in Rutland.³⁶

In July 1919 the association gave an endorsement to Lt. Edward R. White for a motor express line he planned to establish between Rutland and Burlington.³⁷

At the October 1919 meeting of the association representatives of the American City Bureau sought to come to Rutland to talk about what could be done to increase membership in the association. They felt that the key to success lay in a change from the present organization to a chamber of commerce with a paid secretary. At the November 1919 regular meeting it was decided to defer the question of becoming a chamber of commerce to the next annual meeting in February 1920.³⁸

The 1920's

The Rutland Businessmen's Association formally changed its name to the Rutland Chamber of Commerce at the annual meeting at the Community House on 22 March 1920. Annual dues were reduced from \$12.00 to \$5.00 per person. The organization also decided to hire a paid manager³⁹

The 1920 membership campaign struggled to the degree that there was serious discussion of disbanding the chamber of commerce. But by 1 July 1920, membership had leaped to 958 from 418 on 17 June. Enthusiasm quickly replaced doubt and gloom. In September 1920, Mr. Edward A. Robbins was hired as paid manager, but by the following September he had resigned. The rules of the old Rutland Business Association were discarded and a revision of the constitution and by-laws was authorized. An "In and Out Club" for membership provided a novel means of stimulating membership work. If you got three new members, you could leave the club and name your successor.⁴⁰

Discontinuance of the Rutland Street Railway service between West Rutland and Fair Haven was announced on 28 June 1924. The chamber appointed a committee to investigate what could be done but the time of the auto was at hand.⁴¹



RUTLAND HISTORICAL SOCIETY

This public works crew is repairing the dirt road in front of the railroad station. In 1924 the trolley tracks no longer carried the cars of the Rutland Street Railway. The auto had prevailed.

During the 1920's the new chamber of commerce took a much more active role in making known its positions on Vermont legislative issues. The condition of city and county streets and roads also got more attention as auto and truck traffic

increased. Parking on Merchants Row and Center Street for unreasonable lengths of time was a concern.⁴²

On 17 August 1921 a separate Retail Merchants Committee was formed within the chamber. This involved a division of dues between the Retail Division and the chamber. One-third went to the Retail Division and two-thirds to the chamber. But by 3 February 1926 the Retail Division was merged back into the chamber.⁴³

In November 1927 Rutland and Vermont were hit by floodwaters. A special meeting of the chamber was held to organize an emergency fund. Later the Red Cross took over the relief fund.⁴⁴

The old courthouse clock was idle and its idleness became an item at the Chamber meeting of 29 April 1929. Perhaps this was a sign that in a matter of months more than the hands of a clock would be idle.⁴⁵

The 1930's

During the 1930's the country was deep in the throes of the depression. However, in Rutland City, the businessmen members of the chamber maintained their optimism and concerned themselves with promoting the local economy. Their most serious challenge was the faltering Rutland Railroad which had anchored the city's prosperity for so many years. Freight and passenger traffic were falling off sharply.

The chamber supported every request made to it by the railroad. Letters were sent to shippers and suppliers urging exclusive use of the Rutland's route. When other trunk lines threatened to take over the Rutland, members backed the New York Central as the carrier of choice to improve service and retain the car shops in the city. They supported an urgent request to raise freight rates.

In December 1935, G.L.R. French, vice president and general manager of the Rutland, came before the chamber to ask help in obtaining a reappraisal of the railroad's property saying payment at the current rate was impossible. Members responded by forming a committee to render assistance in striking a deal with the municipal government.

While the railroad struggled, highway conditions for motor traffic were improving. A new cement road was constructed between Rutland and Middlebury, and access to New York state was eased with the opening of the Champlain bridge. There was even a suggestion from a representative of the Civilian Conservation Corps to build a road to the top of Killington. Tourism was recognized as an important factor for growth and prosperity. City maps and guide books were introduced. The chamber encouraged the state to reduce the fee for car licenses by 25 per cent and to change registration dates from January to April to encourage the use of private autos during the winter months. Up to this time most automobiles were put in storage during the winter.

Soon downtown parking became a problem and merchants were asked not to park on business streets. A new parking lot was opened at Edson and Willow streets in the summer of 1937. Also in 1937, members of the chamber organized a clean-up week as a result of many complaints about the prevailing soot and smoke in the downtown district. Efforts were made to reduce "eyesores and billboards" and to improve street signage.

In 1931 the need for a "real" library was recognized. With a new federal building being erected on the site of Memorial Hall the small city library was being displaced. A chamber committee was organized to work with the library committee of the board of aldermen and the Rutland Library Association in raising funds to relocate the library to the old federal building on Court Street. Money was raised for furnishings and residents were asked to donate maps, books and other materials of historic interest. A grant of \$40,000 was sought from the federal government.

The need for new industry was recognized and additional space had to be found to encourage firms to locate in the city. In 1931 when Louis Kazon asked for a loan of \$1,000 to set up a dress factory, the chamber responded and individual members raised the money. Other industries arriving in the thirties were the Marvell Underwear and Pajama Company, Killington Manufacturing Company and the Fibre Can Company. The chamber failed to bring the new Vermont Veterans' Hospital to Rutland but worked hard to develop a regional airport and helped bring the Rutland Royals and the Northern League to Rutland in 1938. Other efforts were instigated to provide summer and winter recreation programs.

During these years the chamber had a strong core group of dedicated workers but there was some difficulty in maintaining membership. Professional help was secured and participation increased.



In 1938 St. Peter's Field was expanded and renovated for the entry of Rutland into the Northern League. For the admission price of 35 cents, nearly 50,000 fans watched the Royals in Rutland in 1938. The 1939 Royals gained the league playoffs by ending the season in a second place tie with the St.

Albans Giants. The championship eluded them in the playoffs, however. During World War II the league was disbanded. After the war the league and the Royals were revived, but things were not the same.

While the needs for a new reservoir and flood control were being discussed locally, there was growing effort to reach out to a larger area. Committee members traveled widely, at their own expense, to promote their city's interests. They were being heard in New England coalitions and in state and national government.⁴⁶

The 1940's

By the time the 1940's rolled around the nation was involved in a mighty defense build-up. The Rutland area's heavy industries such as Howe Scale, Lincoln Iron Works, Patch-Wegner and Vermont Marble were awarded military contracts and employment was at a record high. An airport site had been acquired in Clarendon and construction started in 1942. The chamber's motto became "Forward in the Forties".

The Rutland Railroad again posed a problem when employees threatened a strike. A special chamber committee assisted in securing the cooperation of President Roosevelt in the appointment of an emergency fact-finding board. Members participated in hearings which resulted in a two-year agreement to keep the road in operation.

The chamber offices must have become extremely crowded by 1942 when various government agencies sought headquarters for their operations. Moving in were the War Production Board, the State Office of Defense Transportation, the Warden's post and the campaign for War Bond pledges. The chamber was active in raising money for the war effort through sales of war bonds and stamps. A "Bette Davis Ball" was supported in cooperation with the Lions Club and \$30,000 was realized. A "MacArthur Carnival" 4 July 1942 in Main Street Park raised \$9,000.

Because of wartime restrictions there were very few conventions held in Rutland. Eight hundred members of the American Legion did come in July 1942, and 250 enthusiasts attended the U.S. Eastern Amateur Ski Association's convention in November. In spite of travel restrictions skiers were coming to the area by train to ski at Pico. In 1942 more than 4,000 came on Washington's Birthday week-end, overflowing existing accommodations and spilling over into private homes. The chamber was realizing the importance of winter sports to the city's economy.

The Retail Merchants Division was encouraging downtown business with promotions such as Harvest Sales Festivals, Halloween decoration of store windows by school children and a Christmas celebration with holiday decorations. Clerks were given training classes for retail selling and 26 stores held a party to entertain 300 employees.

During these years a shortage of housing was recognized, as was the ongoing lack of space suitable for new business. A number of potential employers lost interest in the area because no buildings were available for immediate occupancy. However, Callahan Cans did set up operations in the city as did Tampax, which later became a major employer. The forties also saw the opening of Rutland Junior College in 1946. Ninety students were enrolled in classes which were held at Mead Community House that year.

The forties were hectic years for members of the chamber but they freely contributed time and energy to ensure the welfare of their country and their city.⁴⁷



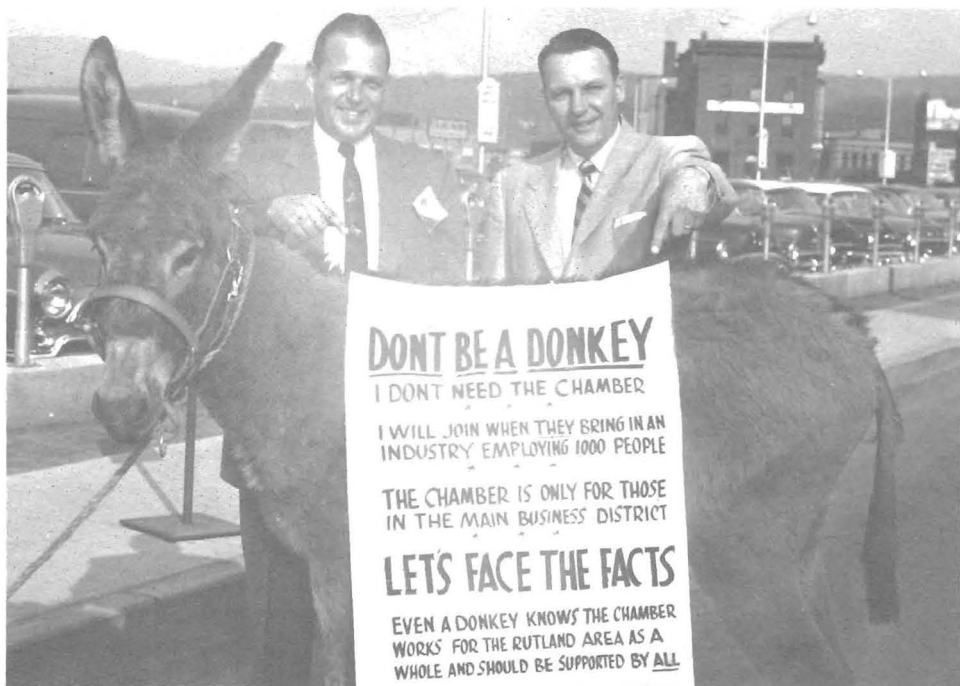
Movie star Bette Davis, who married Arthur Farnsworth of Rutland, presided at the "Bette Davis Ball" on 12 February 1942. The ball, sponsored by the chamber and the Lions Club, raised \$30,000 for the war effort through sales of war bonds and stamps.

The 1950's

When the 1950's arrived the City of Rutland found itself faced with an energetic new breed of businessmen. Younger, more sophisticated after their wartime experiences, and better educated thanks to the GI Bill, they began to replace the older generation. These older men, who had formed a chamber of commerce dedicated mostly to the retail interests of downtown, were no doubt wearied by the demands of the war years and ready to take a back seat.

Malcolm Hatch was hired as executive secretary and the revamping of the chamber was begun. Longtime secretary and manager Lula Tye, a loyal and dedicated employee for over 39 years felt the need to retire. By-laws were re-written to streamline the organization; the board of governors was reduced from 21 to 12 and incorporation papers were filed. The Community Chest, the Green Mountain Club, the Rutland Development Corporation and the Rutland Cooperative Savings and Loan Association were asked to vacate the chamber's quarters which were then refurbished. With the decks cleared for action the new regime was off and running.

One of the first projects was to form a "Live Wire" club, a group of designated troubleshooters whose job was to increase membership and improve public relations. Someone came up with the idea of a winter carnival as a means of promoting Rutland as a ski area. This first effort in 1951 was only a modest success



(Top) Robert Kinney (l) and Richard Papineau (r) pose with a "friend" during one of the chamber's more unique promotions. (Bottom) WRGB-TV's Gary Stevens whose orchestra provided music for many winter carnival balls, crowns Mary Lou Reedy, 1954 queen, assisted by Jane Herrick, 1953 queen.





FEBRUARY
12, 13, 14, & 15 - 1959

ADMIT ONE

ADULT - 1959

To All Events

\$2.00

Voting Closes

9:00 P.M., Feb. 13th

Nº 1475

Tear Off Here

This Stub Valid for 20 Votes
for Rutland Winter Carnival Queen

Contestants of Your Choice

Deposit in Ballot Box
At Merchants Row Headquarters

Nº 1475

SCHEDULE

Thursday, Feb. 12, Pico Peak
Single admission price: Adults \$1.00
7:00 P.M. Sugar On Snow
Outdoor Dancing
Jack Jump
Rail Splitting
Saucer Racing
Torchlight Parade

Friday, Feb. 13
Rutland Fairgrounds
"Winter On Revue"
Single admission price: Adults \$1.00
8:00 P.M. Ice Revue
Sharon Strauss
Sam Champlain Finals
Indian Snow Dance
Fireworks

Meadowbrook, Square Dance
Single admission price: Adults 75c
9 to 12 P.M.

Saturday, Feb. 14
All Day—Central Vermont Public
Service (Retail Store)
Cherry Pie Baking Contest
9:30 A.M. Junior Ski Events
1:30 P.M. Parade, Merchants Row
8:00 P.M. to 12:00 P.M.
Memorial Armory, Carnival
Ball
Single admission price: Adults \$1.50
Queen's Waltz
Interviewing Finalists
Coronation Ceremony

Sunday, Feb. 15, Pico Peak
Single admission price: Adults 75c
9:00 A.M. Bradford Mead Memorial
Giant Slalom, Junior 1 and 2
Boys' and Girls' N. E. Jr.
Giant Slalom
11:00 A.M. Sports Car Gymkhana
2:00 P.M. Exhibition Ski Jumping,
Pico Peak

SAVE \$3.00 by Buying This
WEEKEND PACKAGE TICKET
\$5.00 Value for Only \$2.00

1959 Winter Carnival ticket with reverse side listing the four-day schedule.

due to a lack of snow. Larger successes were two testimonial dinners honoring local women sports champions: skier Andrea Mead and golfer Mae Murray. Another Rutland girl, Peggy Gilbert, who was Miss Vermont, was given a celebratory send-off to Atlantic City.

Partly through the chamber's efforts, four new industries came to Rutland. They were Samica, Carris Reels, Newton Engineering Company and Jem Manufacturing Company.

In 1952 a second more successful winter carnival was held and the chamber became the largest in the state, almost doubling its membership to 404.

In 1954, after several years of intensive effort, the recreation area at Rocky Pond became a reality. Chamber members and Rotary, Kiwanis and Exchange Club members all participated in the project. Efforts to build a new municipal reservoir and to secure parking space in the depot lot also came to fruition. The chamber continued to promote downtown retail sales and published winter and summer guides to bring customers and tourists to the area. Members recognized the need for better air service to and from Rutland.

Major improvements to Routes 103, 4 and 7 leading into the city were eagerly sought. There was talk of routing a Montreal to Boston thoroughway via Rutland. Members began to discuss the need for a new city building code, zoning and sewage disposal.

It seems Rutland's celebrities in the fifties were its young women. The chamber wholeheartedly sponsored Carlene Johnson, who had been named Miss USA, in her participation in the Miss Universe pageant.

In the mid-fifties members gave their backing to the building of an access road which would lead to a new ski area and state park on Mount Killington. They saw the city's future as being tied to the success of area winter sports.

Early in 1957 General Electric Company moved into the plant on Columbian Avenue which Tampax had recently evacuated for a new building. Other expanding companies were Tuttle Law Print, Carris Reels and Samica. In its efforts to attract people to the area, the chamber maintained a library of promotional material. A speakers bureau was formed to address interested groups and to appear on radio and television programs. A movie short extolling the Rutland area was produced and distributed. The Rutland chamber was not only the largest in the state but probably also the most active.

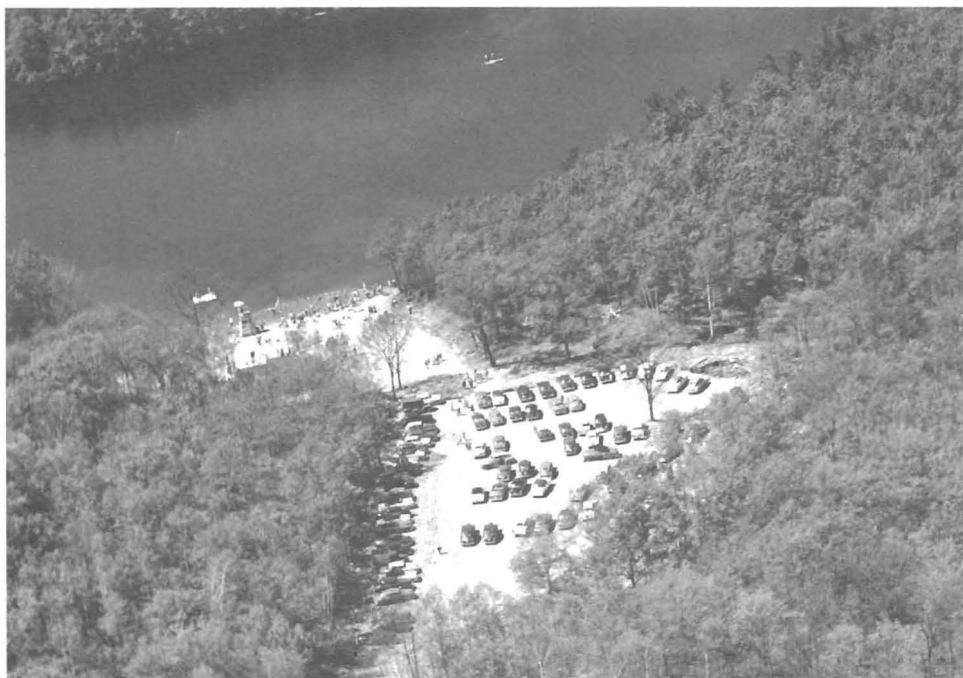
The winter carnival of 1957 was proclaimed the "best yet" with an enlarged program and greater attendance. Also in 1957, the chamber supported a special election which approved extending the runways at the airport to accommodate larger aircraft. In March 1957 the state legislature approved a highway bond which included funds for the Killington access road. Rutland rejoiced in spite of the fact that Routes 103, 4 and 7 were receiving only partial improvements.

The foundation of the first building to be erected in the new industrial park was laid in 1958. The same year the new Rutland Hospital opened after years of planning and fund raising. Executive secretary Hatch resigned and was replaced by an energetic Al Moulton.

Rutland as a crossroads became the chamber's new theme. Rutland was to be the state's Vacation Crossroads, Skiing Crossroads and Shopping Crossroads. Membership leaped to 691 and the budget to \$34,655. The chamber began to expand into other towns of the county.⁴⁸



(Top) A promotional model intended to attract new industry to Rutland also included a plug for the ski industry and the Rutland railroad. (Bottom) The recreation area at Rocky Pond on Pine Hill opened in 1954. It was envisioned and built by members of the chamber and the Rotary, Kiwanis and Exchange clubs. Vandalism forced its close after 1957.





(Top) "Ski the Rutland Region" became a catch phrase in the late fifties. Traveling displays featured Killington, Pico and Okemo as well as smaller ski areas such as High Pond. (Bottom) A Christmas promotional parade brought shoppers downtown to boost retail sales and celebrate the season.





(Top) (l to r) Ray Taft, Don Taylor, Richard Papineau, Philip Bell, Francis Waterman and Malcolm Hatch paint information booth as part of 1952 "clean up" week. (Bottom) Al Moulton (l) and Bob Wray (r) wish Bon Voyage to 1959 Carnival Queen Sandra Miglorie (r) and her friend Bonnie Cooper (l) as they prepare to fly to the Virgin Islands for her first prize vacation.



The 1960's

In 1960 a railway strike threatened the local economy. Although concerned, chamber members were bent on civic improvement and went forward with a plan for urban renewal. Moore Business Forms set up a plant in Rutland but did not choose to occupy the ready-built facility in the industrial park. It would be another two years before O.E. McIntyre occupied the park building.

The chamber supported downtown sales promotions such as Dollar Days, Hatchet Day and a gala Christmas parade and program. Winter promotions expanded to include Okemo and High Pond ski areas as well as Pico and Killington.

In 1956 the New Industries affiliate of the chamber set to work on the construction of a second building in the industrial park for future purchase and occupation by a commercial firm. St. Johnsbury Trucking constructed a new terminal in Rutland and other new or expanding businesses included General Electric, M.M. Farrell and Sons and Randall Plumbing and Heating Company. The newly arrived Zirn Die Casting Company employed a number of the first graduates of the Manpower Re-training Program introduced into the Rutland education system in 1962. More than 1000 new jobs had been created in the city since 1950.

Rail service was restored after being idle for two years. The Vermont Railway Corporation was formed to operate the route between Burlington, Rutland and Bennington. The next year, 1964, the chamber backed state purchase of the Ludlow to Bellows Falls to Rutland link from the Rutland Railway Corporation. There had been little movement on the upgrading of Routes 4, 7 and 103 although some sectional improvements were underway.

Liz of Rutland and Green Mountain Extruders set up business in Rutland encouraged by efforts of the chamber. However, the ill-fated urban development, which members had avidly supported, was defeated by voters.

Cliff Barnes took over as executive secretary in 1965 from a departing Bernard Roach. The chamber was in financial trouble, in debt and underfinanced. Still, the downtown area was coming to life after the decline of the railroad. The Rutland shopping plaza replaced the railroad yards. First National, Firestone and W.T. Grant were the first stores to open in the plaza. Mal Tool and Engineering Company became established in the city.

By 1966 Secretary Barnes declared chamber morale to be higher and its debts paid off. Members helped achieve passage of a water main referendum and adoption of regional planning. Several downtown stores and banks were refurbishing their buildings and both in the city and on the mountain new motels and motor inns were being built. The chamber erected a new marble information booth in Main Street Park and officially changed its name to the Rutland Region Chamber of Commerce.

The chamber was operating in the black in 1967 when ten percent of its membership agreed to double the amount of dues they paid. The minimum rate for dues was also raised. The chamber successfully worked for passage of a \$500,000 appropriation for a new fire station and helped found the Chaffee Art Museum.

Northern Airways arrived in 1969 to augment air service already being provided by Mohawk Air. A new community swimming pool was in the works and

Rutland was the only city in Vermont to acquire the TOPICS government grant to "completely update and modernize traffic systems and flow". But when the decade of the sixties ended the chamber was still flirting with plans to improve access by highway. The latest scheme was for an east-west road from Calais, Maine, via Rutland to the New York Thruway at Amsterdam.⁴⁹

1970 - 1998

From legislative issues, to transportation and special events, the Rutland Region Chamber of Commerce has played an active role in the region during the last twenty-five years.

Transportation issues seem to be one of the main areas of importance the chamber has faced in the 20th Century. From working to get an airport open and keeping air service in the region to maintaining and upgrading our roadways, the chamber has been at the forefront of making sure the region is accessible for businesses, residents and visitors to the region. The chamber played a vital role in the building of the new terminal building at Rutland State Airport and keeping scheduled air service in the region by working with Skymaster, Precision Airlines, and now Continental Connection which is operated by Colgan Air. Other airport projects the chamber was involved in included the runway reconstruction and the upgraded instrument approach that is being planned to allow larger aircraft to land at the airport. The chamber also worked with Amtrak to get scheduled rail service on the Ethan Allen Express and continues to work with the Marble Valley Regional Transit District on bus service and the new Multi-Modal Transit Center being built in downtown Rutland. Other issues that it has monitored over the years include the parking in downtown Rutland, repaving of Route 7 and Woodstock Avenue, and it is currently following the by-pass issue.

The chamber's ability to work closely with the Rutland County legislative delegation, as well as the Governor and state officials has helped influence legislation that has an impact on businesses and the quality of life in the region. Some of the issues the chamber took a stand on included: tax stabilization in the City of Rutland, the Act 250 land use permit process, the Family Leave bill, Workers Compensation, Health Care reform, the Killington land swap, the Act 60 issue, the expansion at Castleton State College and a new family court building. The Legislative Issues committee continues the tradition of working with legislators through an annual legislative breakfast series, the "Rutland Day Under The Dome" bus trip to Montpelier and before legislative committees as needed.

The chamber has had an ongoing role in tourism and promotion since its beginning. With the largest ski area in the east in Rutland's back yard, and many other recreational opportunities that draw visitors to the region, the chamber continually promotes the region and encourages visitors to come and enjoy what Rutland has year-round. The chamber has promoted the region through trade and travel shows and at one time during the mid-eighties even had a Convention and Visitors Bureau that organized and assisted groups planning conventions in the region.

One initiative related to tourism and marketing that the chamber sponsored was Project Awareness. This project was done in the late eighties to make the people of the region aware of the economic impact visitors have on the area. Now, to follow up and continue to promote the region as a vacation destination, the chamber

has formed the Crossroads of Vermont Partnership. The Crossroads of Vermont Partnership is comprised of the Rutland Region Chamber of Commerce, Brandon Area Chamber of Commerce, Poultney Chamber of Commerce, Killington Chamber of Commerce, Rutland Economic Development Corporation and Rutland Regional Planning Commission. Working with Regional Marketing Organization (RMO) grants provided from the State of Vermont, the Partnership in its first year has successfully completed a magazine, poster and brochure that market and draw visitors to the region during the summer. It is working on organizing packages to be marketed to visitors which would include lodging, attractions, tours, etc.

Although business issues have been an important part of the Rutland Region Chamber of Commerce activities, the chamber also has worked to create fun events for both chamber members and people in the Rutland region. Monthly mixers have been a part of the networking opportunities for many years. Some new events added for members include Winter in August - the annual tribute to the ski industry and the economic impact it has on the region; Ski Days at Killington, Pico and Okemo ski resorts; an annual golf tournament and more recently a very successful annual business trade show.

The chamber has also produced and sponsored events for the entire community and visitors including a Winter Carnival, an annual Fan Fare to Fall celebration, three air fairs, a full-fledged air show, and the Green Mountain International Rodeo, which drew contestants from as far away as Canada and Florida.

Some of the chamber's other initiatives included securing funding for renovations to the Fair Haven Welcome Center and assisting in a cooperative effort with Rutland City and Killington to try to bring the Volvo tennis tournament to the region. The chamber supported the Rutland-Ishidoriya, Japan, Sister City relationship and student exchange. The Rutland Region Chamber of Commerce also presented their chamber with an exchange membership.

As the citizens of Rutland enter the 21st Century, they can rest assured that their chamber of commerce, as in the past, will be deeply involved in the development and welfare of the community.

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